

TOWN OF SUNSET BEACH

TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

MEETING DATE: November 5, 2012

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 5c

SUBJECT: Council Chambers Renovation

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION:

In considering expanding the chambers by adding the conference room space we should decide if it is absolutely necessary. The attendance at meetings has been unusually large in recent years. Normally, according to descriptions from staff and council members, both past and present, prior to the Town undertaking the aggressive capital improvements program of the last 5 years, attendance numbered around a dozen people. Since 2007 there have been several major projects that explain a much larger attendance than that prior to that year.

Those projects include the new elevated bridge that was a subject of intense public interest, the town-wide sewer installation project, the acquisition of land for the boat ramp, the acquisition of land for, grant application for funding of, and construction of the second fire station, the acquisition of land for, and the planning of the town's first public park, the island streetscape, and the bike paths, and of course, the cost of all these projects. In addition, the UDO, the beach patrol issue, Jaguar's Lair issue, beach parking, and an atypical interest in town politics, have all contributed to this larger than usual attendance. Whether or not we can expect this interest and attendance to continue is a question to consider before undertaking this renovation.

A question of lesser importance is where to hold council closed sessions if the conference room is used to expand the council chambers. If there are people sitting in that area of an expanded council chambers, then that would require council to move to another room like the Town Administrator's office or Building Inspections.

I believe that the town park issue, the town-wide sewer issue, and other such issues as the beach parking issue and the resulting spike in public interest have created the larger than typical attendance. After a period of time, and perhaps by next fiscal year (FY 2013-14) when the CIP indicates all of the above projects should be completed, there may very well be a significant decrease in attendance. Public meeting room facilities, like storm water ditch and piping facilities, are constructed for typical situations, not unusual overflow situations.

But, if Council anticipates that this recent attendance is the new normal, then it may be necessary also to provide additional parking, which for us will require acquiring additional land, such as the property to our east. It may not be possible, nor should we expect, that the parking lot of the building to our west, once it becomes occupied, will continue to be available for the public attending our meeting. Staff believes that the cost of renovation will be \$50,000 plus, and the cost of providing additional parking would be a few hundred thousand dollars for the land, and some tens of thousands more to construct the parking spaces.

Acquiring the adjacent land made more sense prior to changes in the annexation law. Now that annexation becomes nigh impossible outside of a voluntary one, there is not much likelihood of adding population of surrounding subdivisions. Population growth within the existing corporate limits is dependent on the amount of undeveloped land that is developed such as in Sea Trail and on the island. Much of that development may be purchased by out-of-town property owners for their own seasonal use or rentals, and they are not as likely to attend meetings as permanent residents are.

Absent significant population growth of permanent residents like this town previously experienced, and the consequent staff growth, there may not be a need for expansion.